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Theriot deployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom

VICKSBURG, Miss., March 17 -- Dr. Edwin A. Theriot, on temporary assignment as Director of Programs for the Mississippi Valley Division/Mississippi River Commission (MVD/MRC), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As a member of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), under the administration of Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, Theriot is senior advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Water Resources. Theriot counsels the Minister on managing the country's water resources infrastructure. Water resources include the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, hydropower, irrigation, flood protection and developing navigation capabilities.

"It's an amazing opportunity, a chance of a lifetime, to work on a river system that I've read about for years, one that has such historical importance," said Theriot.

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2-2-2-2 Theriot

Theriot is also developing a plan to restore the Mesopotamian marshes in southern Iraq. Saddam Hussein had the marshes drained in an effort to force Shiite Muslims from the area.

Theriot thinks the reason he was selected to support this operation was his background. Theriot served as Program Manager for the Louisiana Coastal Area ecosystem restoration efforts prior to his deployment to Iraq. The efforts included focusing on development of a near-term plan that addresses critical ecosystem needs that require immediate attention and serve as the basis for a contingent authorization by Congress.

"Environmental restoration is my expertise," said Theriot. Having the opportunity to work on Coastal Louisiana and the Mesopotamian marshes is a dream come true for me," he continued.

Although the project is extremely rewarding, Theriot said the conditions are unnerving. "I have to leave the Green Zone (a secured area for U.S. military and civilians in downtown Baghdad) and travel across town to visit the minister," said Theriot. "You never get use to wearing body armor and being a target," he said.

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Theriot is a member of the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service. As Director of Programs, Dr. Theriot is responsible for the development and execution of Civil Works programs within the Mississippi Valley Division. He provides leadership and supervision for the MVD Programs Directorate and has staff oversight for programs, planning and project management activities in the division's six district offices. Dr. Theriot is responsible for formulating the MVD/MRC portion of the President's annual budget, and advises the Commander in presenting testimony to explain and defend the budget request before Congressional committees. He serves as the principal advisor to the President of the Mississippi River Commission.

Dr. Theriot is also the Director of the Environmental Laboratory (EL). The Environmental Laboratory is located at the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, Miss. As EL director, Dr. Theriot manages one of seven laboratories at the ERDC, one of the most diverse research organizations in the world.

Prior to his current assignments, Dr. Theriot was manager of environmental research programs dealing with impacts to endangered species and management of invasive species and their habitat for more than eight years. As a research supervisor, he directed research in the areas of aquatic ecology, risk assessment and restoration for more than 13 years.

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4-4-4-4 Theriot

Prior to that, he served as researcher and team leader on invasive aquatic species for more than nine years.

He has served in temporary positions as Division Chief, Natural Resources Division; Assistant Director, Environmental Laboratory; and Associate Director, Engineer Research and Development Center.

Dr. Theriot received his bachelor's and master's degrees in microbiology from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. He also holds a doctorate in molecular biology from the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Theriot is a Vietnam era veteran, serving in the U.S. Navy.